

Remarks

Claims 25-36 are pending in the application, with claim 25 and 29 being the independent claim. Claims 20-24, 37 and 38 have been canceled. Entry of the present amendments is respectfully requested.

Based on the present Amendment and the following Remarks, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 20-24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over EP 0097986 to Dhont ("Dhont") in view of JP 63-9767 to Yoshida et al. ("Yoshida").

Claims 37 and 38 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over EP 0097986 to Dhont in view of JP 63-9767 to Yoshida as applied to claims 20-24 above, and further in view of DE 3403704 to Höhn et al. ("Höhn").

Claims 20-24, 37 and 38 have been canceled, thereby rendering the rejection moot.

Allowable Subject Matter

The indication that claims 25-36 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form is gratefully noted. **Claims 25 and 29 have been rewritten in independent form**, including the limitations of the base claim 20 and intervening claim 23. Claims 26-28 depend from claim 25, and claims 30-36 depend from claim 29. **As such, claims 25-36 are allowable and the application is in condition for allowance.**

Appl. No. 09/988,829
Amendment dated February 19, 2004
Reply to Office Action of November 19, 2003

Conclusion

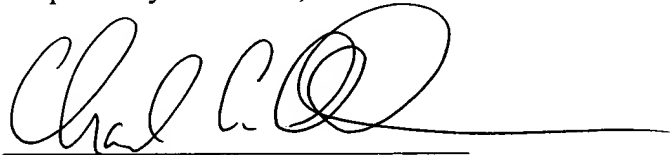
All of the stated grounds of objection and rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn. Applicants believe that a full and complete reply has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is hereby invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

A Notice of Allowance with claims 25-36 is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: 02/19/04

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chad C. Anderson', written over a horizontal line.

Chad C. Anderson
Registration No. 44,505
VENABLE LLP
P.O. Box 34385
Washington, D.C. 20043-9998
Telephone: (202) 344-8257
Telefax: (202) 344-8300